

# Can You Hear Me?

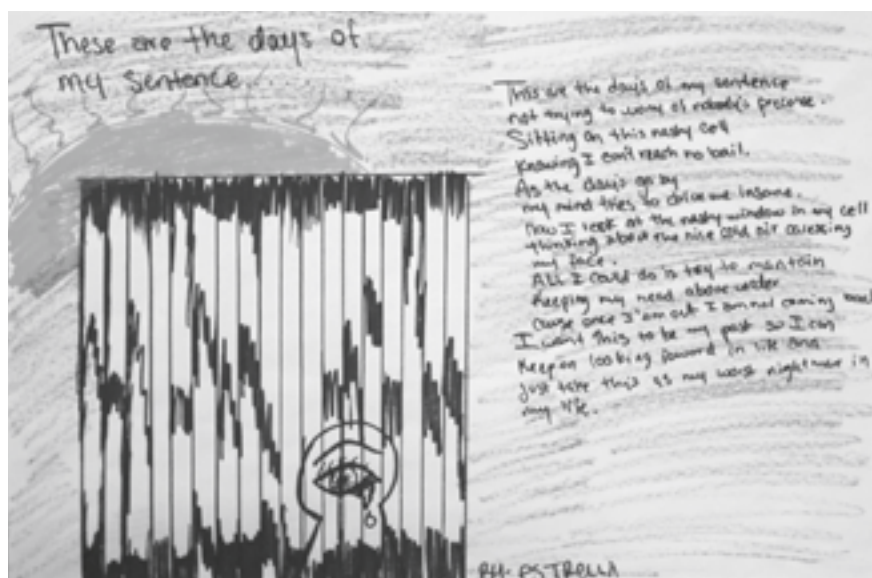
**W**e are delighted to publish the poems that follow, entries to our first Children's Art and Poetry Contest held in 2003 to

honor the 100th anniversary of California's juvenile court. Open to youth of any age who have had experience with the court system, the contest drew a large response from all over the state.

The poems reproduced here—a sampling of the entries, including a range of ages and subjects—were among those published in a booklet distributed at the Celebrating California's Juvenile Court Centennial Conference in Los Angeles. The poems, as well as the background information accompanying them, have not been edited; they are as they were submitted to us, in the language of those who wrote them.

The contest was funded through volunteer efforts at the Administrative Office of the Courts. We express our deepest appreciation to all the young poets who entered the contest and shared their thoughts and feelings with us. And we are also grateful to the many individuals and court personnel who assisted us in reaching out to young people in the court system and helping them participate in this program.

A COLLECTION OF  
POETRY BY YOUTH  
IN CALIFORNIA'S  
COURT SYSTEM



ESTRELLA

*These Are the Days  
of My Sentence...*

## Court

**JUSHEEM W.**

*Age 16*

*Jusheem is in the  
delinquency system in  
San Mateo County.*

Heart pounding

My legs are weak

I feel like I can't walk

Head Hurts

Feels like somebody is pushing down

on both sides of my head.

Wondering if my family is waiting

Wondering if I will get to go home

Waiting for me to be called in

Waiting to be judged

I will never get to go home

I will never get out of here

Im going to be here forever

## Night Time

Incarcerated by my own thoughts.

I try to escape this place of hate but can't.

I feel all hope is lost.

I'm sending prayers to the one on the cross.

Can you help me?

Because I want to do right but at night I turn and toss.

Trying to sleep off this drunkness of sorrow

While thinking bout the past

I'm living in the present trying to plan for tomorrow.

But as I lay in this silence, only young felons breathing.

I hear myself inside my heart and mind yelling and screaming.

I wish I could stay asleep and dreaming.

But awake to reality.

My life is a nightmare where I fight for my sanity.

How long will this go on?

My hearts been torn.

Ripped up, stitched up

Since the day I was born.

DAVID C.

*David is in the  
delinquency system in  
Sacramento County.*

## I Want to Be Adopted

CHELLA N.

Age 13

*"Chella did not officially enter DCS [Department of Children's Services] until the age of 5 even though reports had been made earlier on the family. From that time until age 12, she lived a few months with a relative, a group home, and 2 foster homes. About the time she was 10 an adopted home was sought. Chella went to one adoption fair and inquiries were made but, none that Marin County workers felt were right. I became aware of Chella in the fall of 2001. After 2 visits to California and a Christmas visit from Chella, we both knew that we were meant to be a family. I brought Chella home to Tennessee on March 11, 2002. Our adoption was finalized March 11, 2003. Today Chella is a wonderful part of our family. She has many friends, makes honor roll in school, and is active in band and in church. Chella is my precious gift from God."*

—Chella's Mom

I want to be adopted  
Because I wanted a mom  
I went to Adoption Fairs  
But I didn't meet anybody  
That I would want to live with  
For the rest of my life  
I thought about  
How much I would miss my family  
I used to think that I would get  
To live with my mom again  
But I never got to  
My sister is already adopted  
And she likes it just fine  
Now I just don't know  
What I should do

## Not Another Day

My life to this day,  
has been wasted away.  
A life that no one should have to live,  
not even for one day.  
I've listened to you  
now hear what I say  
I will not live that life  
not even for another day  
starting today I am a changed man  
I am gonna live a productive life  
the best that I can  
I'll never come to this place again  
because I'm sick of livin a life of sin.  
My life will never again waste away  
not for a month, a week, not even another day.

CHRIS W.

*Age 16*

## Innocent Child

CHANDRA P.

*Age 16*

I was just an innocent child lying in my bed  
Not knowing you were lurking and danger was ahead.  
I can feel your presence, you're right in my room,  
All I can hope and wish for is that mommy wakes up soon.  
You touch me all over my body, my feet, my legs,  
and my thighs. You tell me you'll buy me what ever I want  
But I know there bold face lies  
You touch me all over, caress my body and  
grab a hold of my face,  
You do this without a trace, without a trace of guilt  
for what you're doing to me  
Taking my innocence and my virginity  
You know what you've done to me is not fair,  
As you leave my room I feel naked and bare,  
I wait in my room so frigid and scared, and feeling like a fool.  
When morning comes I run to my school.  
I tell my teacher all about you.  
She calls up a number I hope its not you,  
I'm scared, really scared I don't know what to do.

The police come and they take me away, they say in a group  
home is where I must stay.

They take me to court to place you in jail,

They say people like you belong in hell. I see you looking at  
me as I testify,

I stutter as I talk, I think I'm gonna cry. I look at my mother  
who also looks scared,

I can't handle this place, I can no longer bare.

And when I am done they say that its all over,

My mother hugs me softly as she cries on my shoulder

For she knows that I am not coming home

And I realized that's when I started my journey alone.

Eleven years in the system with a sick pathetic dad,

I miss the home that I once had.

But I know it was for the best, I'm doing well in school not  
really good in math.

I know great things are out there,

I must continue the path.

## A Home

ANDY W.

Age 13

*"This poem has changed  
my outlook on where  
I've lived in the last few  
months. I learned from  
my experiences in writing  
this poem that if you are  
happy where you live than  
that is your home. For a  
clearer example, in my  
court experiences I have  
had 3 homes the foster  
home I lived in, Yellow  
Brick Homes in Santa Rosa,  
and Full Circle in Bolinas.  
I know these will always be  
a place of my spirit body  
and mind."*

A Home is not a window

A tile nor a wall

A Home is not a dorm

With rooms down a hall

A Home is what we make it

From the inside out

A Home is where we stand

Where we live, make things work out.



## Needles

the sounds ♦ the rush ♦ the pain ♦ the thrill ♦ the high ♦  
nauseatingly wonderful ♦ waking up without even being asleep ♦  
with bruises, dark, painful, and purple, Running down my arm ♦ not  
knowing where the time went ♦ Still not knowing what I did to pass  
the time ♦ It suffocates me ♦ An issue... ♦ It was sweet relief from  
all my nightmares ♦ Yet it all felt like a hazy dream ♦ Seeing things  
through cloudy eyes ♦ Made it impossible to feel the pain on the  
inside ♦ Impossible to see clearly, the girl I was becoming on the  
inside ♦ So dingy ♦ So dirty ♦ So skinny ♦ So...nauseating

**KASEY C.**

*Kasey is in the  
delinquency system in  
Fresno County.*

## Visiting

AMBER

Age 15

*"My name is Amber and I have been here at Juvenile Hall San Bernardino for almost three weeks now. So far I am doing very well. I have been rehabilitated from my drug addiction, and I have taken the Lord as my savior. I am not yet finished with court and I am really scared. I am here for a crime I did not commit; the sentence for that crime is life. My whole family is behind me 100%, but they are all scared for me also. I am grateful for my time here to give me a full recovery but I hope the truth is found soon so I may go home. My poem relates to my current visiting experiences with my parents. It is always hard for us knowing I may never see home again, but we pray every night and have faith that it will all go well. Until I return home, I will continue to do my best and have these visits every Wednesday evening."*

When ever I look into their eyes  
I can't seem to stop the loving stare  
I can't bring myself to say the words  
To say how much I really care  
I put my hands over my face  
I always hold my feelings in  
I don't know what I will say when I see them again  
Or when I can say those words again  
To tell them all my love for them  
The last time I even told them  
What they mean to me  
They put their hands over mine  
And told me they stand by my side

I am afraid to speak those words again  
For fear they'll lose their delight  
Today may even be the last time  
I may get to see their faces shine  
Their happy faces bring me delight  
I finally think that I am prepared  
To say the words I want to say  
I just hope the words don't slip away  
I know my mom will probably cry  
My dad and I will both ask why  
My mom will only simply sigh  
It seems we've just begun our "Hi's"  
I see it's time for our good-bye's

## Behind Walls

RUBEN V.

*Ruben is in placement  
at a drug and alcohol  
rehabilitation facility in  
San Joaquin County.*

Endless days that count the years,  
No longer can I hold back my tears.  
Serving time behind a wall  
With no one to visit, no one to call.

Like a wild animal locked inside a gate  
Waiting patiently for my parole date.  
No reason to feel any sorrow.  
All I do is pray for tomorrow.

Then one day the gates will open wide,  
That boy that's now a man steps outside.  
As he leaves he looks behind,  
Seeing the same wall holding his own kind.

The broken promises, the empty dreams,  
The sorrow is stitched between the seams.

## Wonder As I Wander

I wonder as i wander out under the sky why do people i care about  
always have to die. Are happy where you are wherever that may be.  
I wonder as I wander do you still think of me.

Is it nice up there in heaven for i know you made it there. Are the  
clouds made out of marshmallows do you know that I still care.

I wonder as I wander out under the sky why do people I care about  
always have to die.

KRISTIN L.

Age 15

*"The piece that I have written is dedicated to two very beautiful people who have passed on and are no longer hurting. My grandfather whom I was living with when I had nowhere else in the world to go. He had lung cancer from smoking and died in my grandmother's arms. We no longer have the best relationship and I don't live with her anymore. I moved around to 36 out of home placements and met a wonderful lady (Mary Taylor) who works at Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court. Well, her husband died and she's not able to see me as much anymore but I want her to know she's took all the bitterness out of me and has me looking to the lord all the time."*

## To Mom

CARRIE M.

Age 11

*“Carrie and her brother were wards of the court several years ago due to alcoholism and domestic violence in the home. They were only in foster care for a short time and were returned to the home as the father was in jail and later went to a 90 day rehabilitation program. I cooperated with all the requests of the court and full custody of the children was returned.”*

—Carrie’s Mom

Love is patient

Love is kind

Love is something

Some people don’t find

Love will be with you

Everywhere you go

Love is something

Some people don’t know

Love is something

That will stay with you

Love is something

Some people can’t get to

Love is something

That is true

Love is something

For me and you

## This Little Girl

She needs your hand  
She is so confused  
She doesn't know  
Where she is or where she is going  
She doesn't know if this is all just a dream  
She needs your hand she needs it so  
She needs your hand to grasp and lead her  
You can't begin to understand  
What this little girl is going through  
She needs your help to know what love is  
She was told that she didn't love herself  
She is lost in this heart  
This heart that is broken  
She can't see what is going on  
With these feelings inside  
She needs your hand to grasp  
To tell her everything will be all right

KASSIE O.

*Age 16*

